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ABSTRACT

The articles in this journal focus on several aspects of adolescent literature. In the first article, author Robert Cormier discusses the process of writing a novel and explains how several of his works came to be. The second article comments on the utilitarian nature of English instruction and its accompanying disparagement of aesthetics. The third article analyzes the subject of pain and suffering in adolescent literature, and the fourth discusses current British fiction for adolescents. The final article discusses media products that address literature. (FL)

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The ALAN Review

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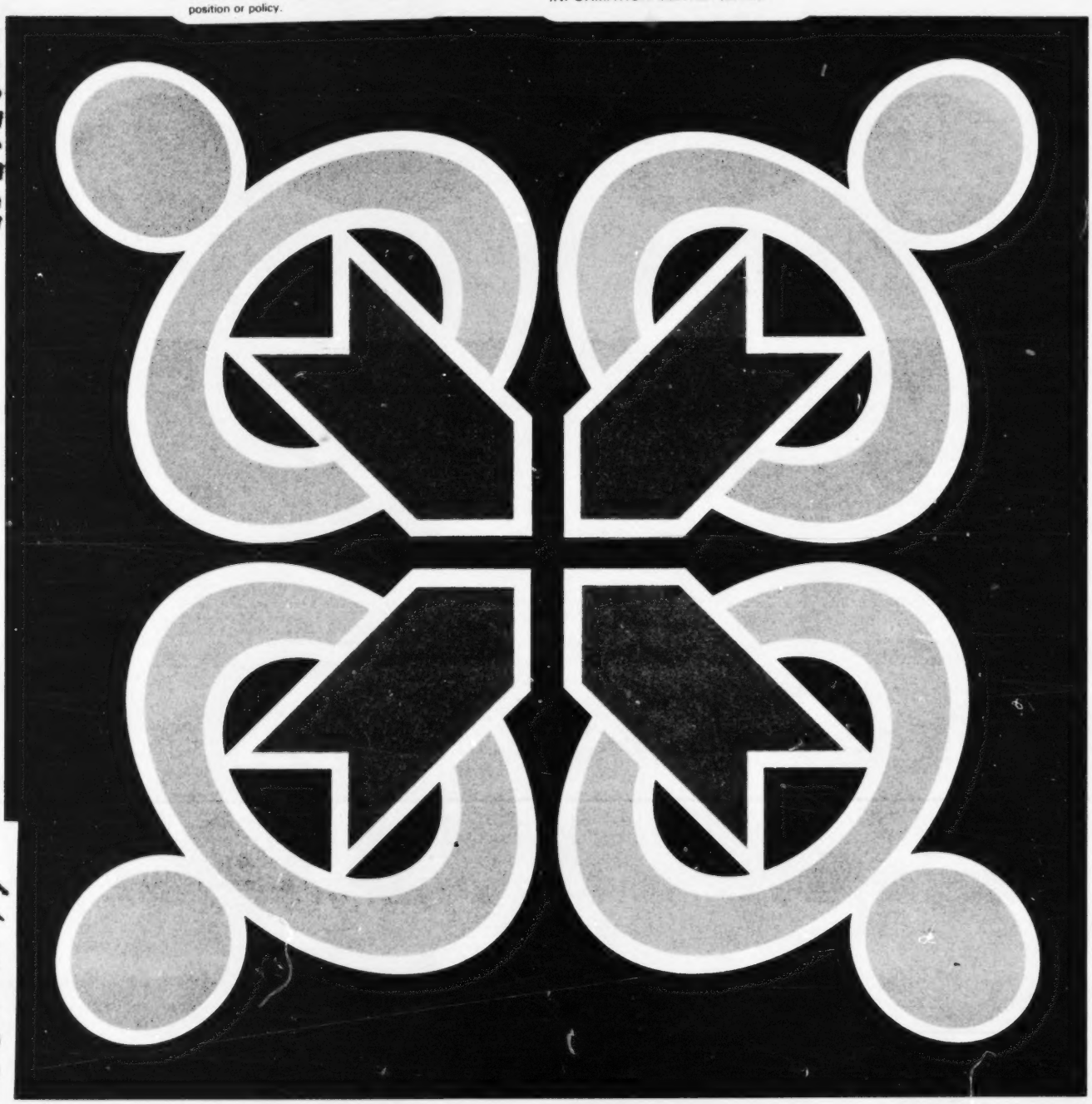

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"Are You Working on a New Novel?" "Yes."

Robert Cormier

The inevitable question, of course, is:
Are you working on a new novel?
And the inevitable answer is:
Yes.

Because I am always working on a new novel and have been doing so for more years than I care to remember.

I have made a practice of not discussing the novel I am currently working on until it's finished. This is not an act of whimsy or to keep people in suspense. It is simply that it allows me to be uncommitted. And I find that being uncommitted is the best way for me to proceed.

I am feeling, in fact, a bit committed to the new novel I'm workin on and which I began in 1979 because I have to some extent broken my rule about discussing it while still writing it.

In a weak moment before an audience that was unusually warm and receptive and for which I felt a special intimacy, I found myself telling listeners the title of the new novel.

Even as I spoke, I wondered: Is this a mistake? Since then, I have answered the question of whether I'm working on a new novel by giving the title and a bit of its background.

The title is *The Bumble Bee Flies Anyway.*

Its origin can be found in the words on a poster that has hung for several years on the wall of the small room that passes for my office in our home on Main Street in Leominster, Massachusetts.

The words: "According to the theory of aerodynamics, and as may be readily demonstrated through laboratory tests and wind-tunnel experiments, the bumble bee is unable to fly. This is because the size, weight, and shape of its body in relation to the total wing spread make flying impossible. But the bumble bee, being ignorant of these profound scientific truths, goes ahead and flies anyway and also manages to make a little honey every day."

The quotation is ascribed to that most prolific of writers: Anonymous.

I've been looking at the poster, which shows a child wandering toward the sea, and reading the words for many years, and knew that someday they would be the theme of a novel. But I knew I couldn't rush it, that I had to wait for the idea to blossom.

The novel, then, is about someone—or something—that is not supposed to be able to do a certain thing but goes ahead and does it anyway. It would seem the novel bearing this theme would be a hopeful one.

Now that I've said that much, not only on paper for this journal but in some of my talks, I must admit that I feel a bit uncomfortable.

That's because people in the past few months have said to me: "How's the novel coming? You know, the one about the bumble bee."

I guess what bothers me most is the fact that it makes me feel committed to producing a novel—something between covers, frozen in print, a piece of merchandise, the subject of a contract, a package to be stamped and weighed and distributed, a book on a shelf in a store or a library. The idea of setting out to produce such a thing scares the daylights out of me.

I have to trick myself into writing a novel—and the trick is to convince myself that I'm not actually writing one.

Maybe I can explain this strange approach to the novel by telling some of the background of what came to be *After the First Death.* (Actually, the same explanation applies to my other novels.)

For some time, I had been considering the nature of patriotism and how it can become such a passion that it turns to evil. An army installation is a brooding presence a few miles from my peaceful home town: a citadel of patriotism. Thus one strand.

Another strand: Reading about acts of terrorism in the newspaper, seeing the results of the acts on television. What kind of person could plant a bomb in a public place and time it to explode without regard for those nearby? It seems to me that the worst sort of evil is the murder of innocent people—mothers and children. The person who placed that bomb—say that it's a man—what does he see when he looks in the mirror that night? Not evil. We rationalize our sins, even as we confess them. Who looks into a mirror and says: I'm the bad guy? But the bomber is the bad guy, evil made flesh, and he can live with himself and continue his fatal work only if he is convinced that what he is doing is good. He must be innocent in his own soul. Thus, just as patriotism can reach a point where it becomes evil, so can evil also blossom into innocence.

All those strands—patriotism, the army installation, the acts of terrorism, evil with the face of innocence—those strands dangled in my mind for months, years it seems. And there came a time when characters evolved out of them. Space doesn't permit exploration here of the emotional catalyst that touched off the birth of the characters—the important thing for our purposes is that certain characters came into being, among them General Marcus Marchand; Artkin, the terrorist; Miro, the innocent monster; Kate Forrester with whom I fell madly in love; and young Ben Marchand who began to break my heart as soon as I'd written the first few words about him. These people came together in a hijacking incident, a situation I thought would hasten climaxes and epiphanies.

So. At this point, I had assembled people in a situation of stress and was working it all out in my mind and at the typewriter. I wanted to see what was going to happen. Maybe nothing, maybe a lot, maybe enough to be a novel sometime. All I had at the moment were characters and events, characters who were children of my imagination and events that were the result of their actions. Oh, I told people—if they asked—that I was working on a novel, but they didn't know that General Marchand or Miro existed. This allowed me to work freely, without inhibitions or restrictions.

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Blue Pencil Notes

Yesterday, the day before my birthday, I received and was reading the letter that had accompanied the card from my grandmother. Even before finishing it, I called to a friend to share some of the beauty of that letter. (As you can see, I'm now calling to you. Please be patient, my reader friends, and I will bring this unaccustomed rambling style to a point about YA literature.) To be sure, my appreciation had the advantage of a long and loving relationship. But there was more than just the glow of memories, for the letter conveyed as much by how it was written as by the more limited scope of exactly what was said. Yes, our response is enhanced by our knowledge of the writer—in this case a grand lady born in 1888, now living self-sufficiently with her plants, garden, and many friends nearby. It seems clear, however, that the flow of language was not common, certainly not what we have become accustomed to hearing and reading nowadays. Let me share a bit: "Diane and Donn expect a little visitor (baby) in September 1980. Maybe it will be on one of the six birthdays we have in September or on our one anniversary. My father's birthday was January 16, having been born in 1848 and passed on to Glory in 1925, the year Jane was born."

A few years ago I received a letter in response to a note I had sent a relative who was a nun. In this instance I did not know the writer, but the beauty of the language prompted me to save the letter, for I instantly recognized in it a variety of language which is little known or encountered today. Here is a part of that letter:

> Your card to our dear Sister M. Dominica has come and in Sister's name I pray that Peace and Happiness be yours . . . This message may sound strange and I must admit that it is, but I am attempting to break to you gently news that will no doubt sadden you and your family.
>
> Our dear Sister Dominica is no longer with us as she was called to her Eternal Home on August 11th last. . . . The Priest and Doctor were immediately notified and they confirmed our thought that Sister had quietly passed away in her sleep. While we miss our dear Sister, we rejoice, as I know you will that she is now enjoying Eternal happiness.

It could be argued that both missives had a strong affective burden for the reader, me. While this is true, it doesn't fully confront the differences seen in the language. What is more, it could be counterargued that writers today might do well to perceive more of the possibilities for affective approaches to their audiences. Yes, the writing is filled with euphemisms, which we are generally told are signs of weakness in writing. The style is somewhat rambling, which we are told is to be avoided as an obstacle to clear expression and theft of our reader's time. The tone is definitely one of gentleness and caring. There is almost a floating quality about it, perhaps partially explained by some syntactic variations.

The first writer is known to be of the Nineteenth Century, and the second, if not personally so rooted, has undeniable historical ties which pervade her life. Considering this authorial information and the writing itself, I was put in mind of the likes of James Fenimore Cooper and Henry James. (No, dear reader, neither of my correspondents is about to produce another *The Prairie* or *The Europeans.*) While Cooper and James were clearly different in many respects, it remains that their works are protracted and replete with circuitous depictions, if not outright euphemisms. It is true, too, that the only students to be seen carrying copies of Cooper's or James' works are those who have been so directed and are under expressed or implied threat. Certainly people in the general population do not spend their time reading such books.

It is about time you were asking what all this has to do with young adult literature. Well, I began to wonder if all this shifting in language acceptability might in any way be related to the considerable growth in popularity of non-fiction/informational books. The content of such books is, at least ostensibly, utilitarian and to the point. It is in keeping with our directives in composition classes to be concise, direct, clear. Attempts to embellish are turned aside with derogatory mention of "purple prose" or "That was nice in elementary school, but let's try for more mature expression."

I really do believe in an integrated English curriculum. The fact is that we have one whether or not it has been intended. It just may be that while we've been busy teaching one thing we have been conveying more than we had anticipated—and some of the unexpected learnings may not be to our liking.

Before it begins to appear that I am attributing English teachers with the power to have brought about this state singlehandedly, I hasten to say that the major force is probably simply something as unmanageable as the tenor of the times—the oft cited tempo of our lives. It is only natural that students, like the rest of society, look for the quick and satisfying so that they may be about whatever is next on their individual daily agendas. Were it not thus, MacDonald's, Arby's, Pizza Hut, *et al* would not have succeeded as they have. Let's face it, we've become a "Slam, bam, thank you, ma'am" society. For all our proclamations about the importance of process over product, we in fact are terribly goal oriented. You know, the "let's get on with it" approach. We even take pride in being able to push through what seem like impediments to answer the question "What's the bottom line?"

Most students no longer attend school for an education; they attend for a job. Check the college enrollments in various majors and see how the trend has been toward majors which promise a job. Schools are indicted by society for having graduates who are not job trained—an evidence of our failure to convey or

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All My Sorrows: Pain in Adolescent Fiction

Joseph O. Milner, Frederick S. Carter, Wake Forest University

"Pain is the great teacher; adolescents who suffer grow," *or* "All our students ever learn from failure is how to fail." The former statement represents the well-trod path of conventional wisdom, the latter, a newer, more student-centered one. Such contrary approaches to the power of pain and loss may leave one confounded in considering the question of suffering's worth. And though the latter position is seemingly more humanistic, we would, like Robert Frost, want to embrace both truths rather than merely one. We would hope that our students might learn about pain and what it teachers without somehow being sundered by it. Perhaps, though, we may be able to have our cake *and* eat it through the books adolescents read. Certainly, much of the fiction which dominates the scene today gives young readers the chance to know suffering in an intimate way without being overcome by it. As teachers of these powerful books we can point to the various reactions and/or approaches to pain and suffering found in such works. While the Book of Job probably remains the ultimate study of human suffering, these other sources present some new and insightful perspectives on human suffering which our students may learn from. No two readers (or writers) view surfering in quite the same way, but the greater the variety and power of these views that students encounter, the more likely the possibility of growth. One could almost see such exposure in developmental terms, as an ever widening circle of role taking. But even if one sees literature as enchantment rather than persuasion to a world view, the shifting perspective on suffering will itself be a powerful part of the enchanting process of these works of art.

An initial approach to pain or suffering is that of downplaying it or overcoming it. Those writers who take this approach do not deny the existence of pain, but instead emphasize a positive response to it. Two very different subsets of this approach will come to mind immediately: Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting* and William Goldman's *Princess Bride.*

Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting* is the story of a 19th-century American girl, Winnie, who discovers four souls who have drunk from a hidden spring which has wholly arrested their aging. The naive partakers, the Tucks, unable to age or die, thus, suffer the special agony of having no enduring friends, and finally commit murder to prevent a demonic opportunist who has discovered their spring from marketing the magical water. As she is increasingly caught up in this drama, Winnie is confronted by succeeding dilemmas: she is kidnapped, witnesses murder, absorbs Mae Tuck's death sentence, and finally is party to a jailbreak. And yet, throughout the story there is a consistent emphasis on deliberate, sober reaction to adversity. Rather than responding with histrionics and hysteria, Babbitt's major characters react to each situation with daring, composure, and confidence. Her people are neither immuned to impulse nor unemotional, but neither are they overwhelmed by their difficulties. Instead, they accept their trials as part of life and respond to them with moral fervor and noble endurance. By the time the Tuck's tale is told, we have developed a profound admiration for each of them.

Another way to deal with pain and suffering is to laugh at it or keep it at a distance. William Goldman does this brilliantly in *The Princess Bride.* Although his novel reads basically as a swashbuckling tale of love, heroism, and bravery which unfolds in a mythical medieval realm, the plot runs to great depths, eventually outlining the often painful pasts of every major character. But the emotional turbulence which one would expect to be manifested as a result of these painful experiences never materializes. Goldman is so skillful in blending the absurd and his (often giggly) wit into the tale that the suffering of his characters is effectively distanced. Although this means of blunting empathetic response may seem an irresponsible or insensitive way to deal with human suffering, Goldman may be showing us the necessity of gaining a larger perspective on our own seemingly momentous, but in fact miniscule, problems: Tragedy and comedy lie desperately close together. Young readers who are most serious about themselves—and properly so—might be given reason here to gain a second opinion of their own lot—to see themselves as others might see them.

It is not always advisable or possible, however, to take this approach. We are not always able to laugh off pain or meet it with nobility. Pain is easier to bear, though, if the sufferer is aware that it can be a constructive force, that it can lead somewhere. Three powerful and popular books, *Home Before Dark, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich,* and *A Day No Pigs Would Die,* while avoiding such difficult homilies as "all things work together for good," provide clear examples of this approach to pain and suffering.

Sue Ellen Bridgers' *Home Before Dark* is both the story of Stella, the strong-willed daughter of a migrant worker, and a very real depiction of the special sufferings of a poor, landless, southern family as they try to return to their roots. Bridgers knows the human condition and vividly depicts both the physical and psychological pain attendant to this special group. We see Stella's mother suffer from losing the peculiar security she derived from the anonymity of the open road; her father having to grovel before his younger brother because he forfeited his birthright; Stella's grandmother drain her own life into her mattress because she would not capitulate to a dependent bed of terminal illness; Stella's close friend, Toby, mauled by a shameless suitor (whose own shallowness is pitiful) and later throttled psychologically by the knowledge that his social standing negates all his care for her. None of them, however, responds wholly to these sorrows in bitterness or hysteria. Each, in some way, manages a stoic acceptance and a measure of personal growth, seemingly th essence of Bridgers' work. She does not in any way undercut or obfuscate pain, but neither do we feel pain and suffering are overwhelming.

Alice Childress's *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich* is a somewhat more foreboding book. Cast in an inner-city setting, it centers on the interior privations of such a life. Because it is brilliantly told from multiple contending points of view, the book directly exposes not only the pain suffered by the characters, but also the rationales through which they allow themselves to continue to torture each other. Benjie's pain is, of course, most directly exposed because of the way Childress shapes the several narrations: We gain an intimate view of his suffering which arises from lack of hope, loss of a father, limits of self-confidence. Ironically, only when this trouble manchild inflicts a final bit of pain on his unwilling surrogate father, Butler, does he provoke the chase which begins in hate and ends in an act of binding love. And though we read that heroes have been reduced to the level of subs, we have some hope that Benjie may have stopped blaming others for his suffering long enough to act as though he's learned enough to love himself.

Robert Newton Peck's *A Day No Pigs Would Die* offers even more of this tentative hopefulness. Working out of a tough rural setting, this book emphasizes the necessity of suffering. The main character, Rob, grows up on a farm on which hard work and sacrifice are the most basic realities. From the book's opening scene, Rob endures a physical battering when in the birthing scene he tries to alleviate the travail of Nature, and the pain continues as his family's fortune steadily sours. He confronts pair most directly, however, in a pair of related dilemmas: In the slaughter of his sterile pet sow, which he had hoped would be a breeder, and in the death of his father. Rob's reluctant, grieved slaughtering of his sow is, however, transformed by the familial bond which this sacrifice manifests. Rob seems to have learned enough about suffering and death that on the day no pigs would die he can face the severe pain of ultimate separation. And though the narrator's tone of understatement will not claim too much growth for Rob (some would even see his identity formation as foreclosed), the reader has the peculiar sense that Rob's hard life has prepared him for the realities which clearly lie ahead.

Bridgers, Childress and Peck have, in their varied ways, portrayed suffering as a force which ennobles or promotes the growth of their characters. But there is another school of thought which views suffering as merely a destructive and unredeeming force. Those who share this view do not offer the conclusion that defeat can be turned into victory, or even tentative success. They instead concentrate on the sad inevitability of human suffering, and what can be done to make such lives more bearable. *The Pigman, Summer of My German Soldier* and *The Chocoloate War* increasingly assert this fate-ridden view of pain.

Zindel's deeply appealing book, *The Pigman*, presents two adolescents who suffer in an environment that seems designed especially to make life hurt. Even when they find in Mr. Pignati a haven from the pain of care-less families, they are unable to keep from abusing their privileges and bringing on—quite unintentionally—the death of their loved but misused friend. Their abuse is, in fact, the major source of his pain in that a maturing relationship very quickly shifts to irresponsible acts of destruction. Unlike the other authors, Zindel does not turn this tragic ending into experience on which the two can build a new, more fulfilling life. Though the novel takes on the form of an antiphonal confession, we are not sure we should expect the two to turn their knowledge into responsible action. Moreover Zindel refuses to justify such suffering; his aim is merely to help one understand how bad it can be, not to redeem it. Perhaps only Zindel's reader can be expected to be changed.

Like Zindel, Bette Greene, in *Summer of My German Soldier*, offers no justification for, or shelter from, suffering. Patty Bergen's life, except for the brightness brought to it by Ruth and Anton, is one of dark, lonely suffering. Because her father and mother have suffered, they pass their pain on to their daughter. Thus, when, as a young Jewish girl, Patty shelters an escaped German POW, she destroys what little domestic peace she had. When they discover what she has done, Patty's parents react in an unnaturally cruel, defensive manner. The evils which Patty endures seem to have no redeeming value; her sense of self worth and hope seem to have been wholly decimated. And though Greene does celebrate the empathy which Patty finds outside her family as a temporary opiate for pain, the reader is left wondering whether the intervention of Anton and Ruth is sufficient to create a buoyancy great enough to keep her life afloat.

Robert Cormier, in *The Chocolate War*, does not even have moments of solace to celebrate. His book's main character, Jerry Renault, meets a kind of unrelenting pain when he tries to assert his own individuality rather than comply with the chocolate system. And though he begins his assertion, ironically, as part of an initiation into a group, his rebellion soon becomes a matter of conscience. As his support falls away, however, the certainty of principled action begins to diminish. He questions his own intentions and finally reaches his own sad conclusion that such assertions stem from mere hubris. As readers, we see enough of the darkness in each of the smaller characters who surround Jerry to know how easily even more sinister forces can manipulate that fear and uncertainty which is a part of their basic condition. That Jerry is crushed, physically and mentally, is easily understood. Less easy to accept is the fact that Jerry receives little sympathy and no real understanding during the course of the story. Moreover, the agony that this one person suffers does not seem to cause growth, does not evoke revelation, but, in fact, leads to total collapse. Cormier, though, is not a sadist; he definitely does not approve of what happens to Jerry. His is simply a very sober warning that most dark clouds do not have silver linings. Perhaps he is telling us that a more thoughtful Jerry might better have recognized his limitations rather than attempted noble gestures which inevitably lead to pointless martyrdom.

These three rather distinct perspectives on pain and suffering are clearly not exhaustive of all the possible ways of penetrating this powerful topic, nor are the insights into this particular aspect of these books nearly definitive. But the analysis does offer what is hoped to be a helpful beginning to any such investigation and some nuances within those starting points which might provide some useful entrees to this rich literature.

Across the Ocean and Into Our Classroom

Kenneth Donelson, Arizona State University

Before my wife, Annette, and I left for a sabbatical in England which covered much of the spring and about half of the summer, I had done some spadework on the history of young adult literature in Great Britain. I read the standard histories, and I read enough early literature to recognize that British authors like Mayne Reid and R. M. Ballantyne had been popular on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean with their tales of boys and adventures. Though superior to Reid and Ballantyne, Richard Hughes' *Tom Brown's School Days (1857) and Tom Brown at Oxford* (1861) were less avidly read by young Americans, perhaps because Hughes' books suggested an educational system so different from the one American readers recognized.

Later quite good English school stories like F. W. Farrar's *Eric, or Little by Little* (1858) and Talbot Baines Reed's *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's* (1887) proved even less successful, partly because of the different schools and sports involved, partly because of the language employed. That American readers were not indifferent to school stories was established when America's schools flourished a few years later. Then Ralph Henry Barbour began his highly successful series of American school-sports novels.

And if British authors as popular as Bessie Marchant and Angela Brazil didn't readily cross the Atlantic, American authors like Louisa May Alcott and Susan Coolidge did. Indeed, Coolidge's "Katy" five-volume series, especially *What Katy Did, What Katy Did at School,* and *What Katy Did Next,* were more popular in Great Britain than in the United States, and the series seems to retain its popularity there while Coolidge is almost a forgotten name here at home. Perhaps the oddest example of Trans-Atlantic favor is Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* (1851), the first of the so-called domestic novels. It not only became popular in England, it retained considerable popularity for some time, long after it was dead and decently interred here in America. In 1950, the London University Press published an illustrated and abridged edition suggesting that Warner's old-fashioned books still had something going for them, though precisely what was never clear.

There is an interesting parallel between American and British young adult literature. Successful writers had appeared in both worlds prior to 1967, but that year marked an almost dramatic parallel rise in the quality in literature. In the United States, 1967 witnessed the appearance of Ann Head's *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones* and S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, and Paul Zindel's *The Pigman* appeared the following year.

Critic and author John Rowe Townsend noted in his introduction to *25 Years of British Children's Books* that "The most remarkable single year was probably 1967"[1] and pointed to the publication in Britain that year of Alan Garner's *The Owl Service*, K. M. Peyton's "Flambards," Leon Garfield's *Smith*, John Christopher's *The White Mountains,* and Joan Robinson's *When Marnie Was There*. Although Townsend does not mention it, another book by Josephine Kamm published in 1965 also broke ground, the very popular *Young Mother.* Kamm's novel about sixteen-year-old Pat Henley, pregnant and at odds with her mother, was one of the early books in Great Britain to cause problems with librarians who may have wondered if the book ought to be stocked given its subject matter. The book is mundane, unsensational, and unexplicit, but it is honest in refusing to provide a neat, easy, and glib ending as a parallel American novel, Head's *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones,* did. One critic wrote that *Young Mother* "is almost a text book on how to have an illegitimate child,"[2] but that was not merely too severe, but a silly example of overkill.

It's difficult to handle Great Britain's contemporary young adult literature in a short space, but let me sketch out just a few titles available in inexpensive paperbacks. Puffin (Penguin) is the finest catalogue, and for good reason—it is the child of one of guiding geniuses, perhaps *the* genius, of YA literature in Great Britain, Kaye Webb. Puffin Books includes English authors as good as Helen Cresswell, Clive King, Patricia Wrightson, Nina Bawden, Ivan Southall, Peter Dickinson, Leon Garfield, K. M. Peyton, Rosemary Sutcliff, and Barbara Willard. Also listed are American authors like Betsy Byars, Bette Green, Scott O'Dell, Jean Merrill, Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, Paula Fox, Ursula LeGuin, Rosa Guy, and Robert Heinlein. A section devoted to Peacock Books, those for older and more mature students, lists excellent books like Lynn Reid Banks' *One More River,* Roy Brown's *Find Debbie!*, Margaret Drabble's *The Millstone,* Leon Garfield's *The Pleasure Garden,* Benjamin Lee's *It Can't Be Helped,* J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye,* and Ivan Turgenev's *First Love.* The Puffin catalogue contains the greatest number of excellent YA titles to be found in England.

But it is not the only catalogue worth looking at. Fontana's catalogue contains Alan Garner's major books along with some of the best of Mollie Hunter and Marjorie Darke and Allan Campbell McLean, and it has some of the best American YA novels, Richard Peck's *The Ghost Belonged to Me,* Paul Zindel's *The Pigman,* Lloyd Alexander's *Chronicles of Prydain,* S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders,* and Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War.* The latter title is highly regarded, even venerated, by the editors I talked to, though how many students in or out of English schools read Cormier seems unsure. Most of the teachers I talked to hardly knew his name. That ignorance would have me worried more had I not known some American teachers who would have had equal trouble recognizing Cormier's name, or the name of most other major American YA novelists.

Piccolo Paperbacks' catalogue (Pan Books) offered less, but it did have Honor Arundel's *The High House,* Judy Blume's *It's Not the End of the World,* Mollie Hunter's *The Ghost of Glencoe,* Joan Phipson's *The Cats,* and a number of excellent novels by Penelope Lucky. It also had eight of Enid Blyton's books.

A bit more about her later. Pyramid Paperbacks from Heinemann had even less, but since it had Julia Cunningham's *Dorp Dead*, Richard Parker's *Quarter Boy*, and Glendon and Kathryn Swarthout's *Whichaway*, it could hardly be ignored.

The most intriguing of the catalogues was the Topliner catalogue distributed by Macmillan. Devised and edited by former teacher and present critic and writer Aidan Chambers, the Topliner series just celebrated its tenth anniversary of producing quality books about young adults and young adults' problems today. The books certainly have often been more controversial than other series; they have been attacked for being pap, but they certainly have attracted teachers and readers. Topliners include two fine American books, Swarthout's *Bless the Beasts and Children* and Robert Lipsyte's *The Contender*.

Some titles that have been best sellers and occasionally controversial in the process are Reginald Maddock's *The Pit*, Barry Pointon's *Break-In*, William Corlett's *The Gate of Eden*, and Stanley Watts' *The Breaking of Arnold*. Four Topliners are asterisked to indicate "books which may be thought controversial in language or content." Petronella Breinburg's *Us Boys of Westcroft*, Farrukh Dhondy's *The Seige of Babylon*, J. M. Couper's *Looking for the Wave*, and John Crompton's *Up the Road and Back*. Many Topliners are worth reading, and most of the books have proved useful with reluctant readers, though I believe that should not be their sole audience.

I talked to a number of people who gave me more time than they had, I suspect, originally planned to give, and I want especially to thank Kaye Webb, Aidan Chambers, Brigid Chard, and Jennifer Marshall. Jennie Marshall deserves more than passing mention since she is both a helpful and delightful person and director of the Children's Division of the National Book League at 7 Albemarle Street in London, not the only place to visit if you're interested in British YA literature, but surely the place to begin. The children's section of the National Book League occupies a small basement that might have been dark and dismal had not the warmth of the personnel and the wealth of materials available made the area pleasant and inviting. Jennie and her staff have the current year's supply of YA and children's literature, the standard texts and periodicals on YA literature, and a number of pamphlets available to anyone who wants to read in the field.

I heard many names tossed around as favorite authors of the young adults in Great Britain, and several names popped up more than once. Students and teachers alike mentioned American writers like Maia Wojchiechowska, Judy Blume (a real favorite, apparently), Paul Zindel, S. E. Hinton, Anne McCaffrey, Ursula LeGuin, and Ray Bradbury. Teachers were estatic about Robert Cormier, but—as I said earlier—young adults I talked to had rarely read his work. British authors mentioned several times covered a wide territory, Susan Cooper, Rosemary Sutcliff, Rumer Godden, William Corlett, J. R. R. Tolkien, Peter Dickinson, Susan Hill, Nina Bawden, K. M. Peyton, and Robert Westall. Opinion seemed divided on Alan Garner, teachers lauding his work—especially *The Owl Service* and *Red Shift*—for its literary excellence, students often admiring but not always liking his work. Leon Garfield was often treated in reverse fashion, students liking his work better than the teachers. One writer I admire but whom I was surprised to hear mentioned several times was science fiction writer John Wyndham. Several teachers reported that Wyndham's books, notably *The Day of the Triffids*, cut across social and intellectual lines and created interest in readers heretofore uninterested in books or science fiction.

But as these authors, great and small, were mentioned by teachers and young adults, other popular names also popped up—James Bond thrillers, Georgette Heyer, Barbara Cartland, Enid Blyton, and Nancy Drew—suggesting that not all the reading done by British youngsters was all that serious or great, thank God. Like American readers, young or old, bright or dull, these young people read from a wide assortment of goodies, some sweet, some sour, some enriching, some calorie-ridden, some junk food. They read, as far as I could see, as we all read, a bit of this and a bit of that without worrying all that much whether their reading was all great literature or any particular kind of literature. What they demand we all demand of books, that books involve us and make us care about them, not much more than that.

I began by digging into British criticism of YA literature at the Library Association Library at 7 Ridgmount Street (part of the British Library). I soon discovered that one of the major undertakings of many critics is the periodic attack on Enid Blyton and her many works. Fervid and deadly sincere, these critics are easily just as effective as American critics who have squandered their energy over the years attacking Nancy Drew. Critics have aimed their remarks at teachers and librarians already committed to the proper party line without even coming close to convincing a single child. I am told that the pointless attacks on Enid Blyton are lessening. I wish I could say the same for American librarians or teachers attacking Nancy Drew. Aidan Chambers worried a little about those who worried a lot about what someone called ribbish in reading and the kids who read it.

> By rubbish adults usually mean literature which in their judgment lacks any artistic, moral or educational value. And the objection to it seems to be that by reading rubbish children cripple their own imaginative, linguistic and moral powers, as well as their ability to come to grips with and appreciate good quality literature. Whatever the objection may be, one thing is sure: teachers and librarians worry about the rubbish children read. Their worries are not altogether unfounded but they are sometimes carried to far. No one would suggest that children should be encouraged to read rubbish—they do not need encouragement on that score—but some people would suggest that they should be strongly discouraged, and then, I believe, more harm than good is done.
>
> Even when a child seems to be reading nothing else but rubbish, at least we know that he is reading something: he still has a finger-hold on the written word, and we still have a hope of widening his range and vision. In the end, it is always better that children read something than they read nothing at all.3

Given the continuing popularity of Blyton's paperbacks published by Piccolo and the Hodder and Stoughton hardbacks, the widespread popularity of Helen Dore Boylston's *Sue Barton* series in Knight paperbacks, and the delights of the many *Nancy Drew*

and the *Hardy Boys* titles in Armada paperbacks, British young people would seem to have little trouble finding attractive rubbish nearby.

Fairly early in our trip, I discovered something that surprised me about British YA literature. I've spent most of my college career worrying about and writing about adolescent literature and censorship. Since I had been told so often that censorship was American and only rarely British

Fairly early in our trip, I discovered something that surprised me about British YA literature. I've spent most of my college career worrying about and writing about adolescent literature and censorship. Since I had been told so often that censorship was American and only rarely British, I had more or less forgotten about censorship as a possible cause of concern to British teachers, librarians, writers, or publishers, but I was wrong.

One evening while we were living in Wells (a magnificent Cathedral city a few miles southwest of Bath) I lay on the floor of our flat half reading the *Guardian,* half listening to the election forecasts over BBC. BBC switched to other news and I heard a newsreader telling of someone, somewhere who objected to Lynne Reid Banks' *The L-Shaped Room* as one of the set-books for some examination or other. The objector apparently viewed the book as unfit, though precisely how or why so remains a mystery since not another word about the matter appeared over television and the papers carried nothing at all about the matter. But my curiousity was aroused, and when I later talked to a few writers, editors, and publishers, I learned that censorship did exist in Great Britain, if not quite in the degree or the way we have learned to fear it so much in America.

Teachers in Great Britain generally seemed unconcerned and unaware of censorship. With the political realities of British schools and with the headmaster having powers unknown to American counterparts, most British teachers could remember only an isolated case of transferring some student or other out of one class into another class to solve the matter. Certainly the word *problem* seemed to them too strong a word to apply to the issue. One teacher talked to me of attacks, unsuccessful, on *The Catcher in the Rye.* Most could recall nothing approaching censorship. One person mentioned some details of an attack a few years back without being able to remember anything specific, not even the title in question, and concluded, "We all quietly shuddered about the matter and went on to something else."

When I returned to London, I found several editors, publishers, and critics who had a different view of British censorship of YA literature. They agreed that little censorship in the schools was likely, but they convinced me that censorship pressures on publishers were very real. One editor said she was accustomed to getting letters from irate parents about this or that title, usually along the lines of "I always trusted your paperbacks not to have such language in them. I won't trust them again." She said she had thought most seriously about bidding for the British paperback rights to Cormier's *The Chocolate War,* had decided not to pursue them, and now regretted the decision. Even worse, she is convinced that some of the titles in her series are likely to be dropped from the catalogue next year because of the pressure to publish non-controversial novels.

She was not the only person to argue that censorship in Great Britain primarily meant pressures on publishers. A few novels were repeatedly pointed out to me as examples of controversial books publishers had been pressured not to publish—Robert Westall's *The Machine Gunners,* Barry Hines' *The Blinder,* and Farrukh Dhondy's *The Siege of Babylon.* Petronella Brienberg's *Us Boys at Westcroft* had come under attack in two newspapers, *Sun* and the *Daily Telgraph,* and had suffered the usual spate of letters, largely unfavorable, often questioning motives of writers in writing such filth and publishers in publishing such unhealthy stuff. One person clearly did not understand why American teachers and librarians had so readily sold out to censorial pressures and noted that the attack on Paula Fox's *The Slave Dancer* could not have happened in Britain but was only an example of American foolishness.

Interestingly enough, I witnessed an episode at least bordering on censorship, one of those rare times that YA literature makes the big time of newspaper space (outside reviews) and television footage. Nigel Gray's *The Deserter* had not found a publisher in Britain, but Harper had published it in America, and the *Daily Express* for Tuesday, April 24, 1979, headlined page 8, WHO ARE THEY KIDDING? YET ANOTHER PROPAGANDA MESSAGE FOR AMERICA—THIS TIME AIMED POWERFULLY AT OUR CHILDREN.

Gray's story, for those who do not know it, is about four English children who befriend a deserter from the British Army in Northern Ireland, listen to his story of the brutality of British troops, and protect him as long as they can. Part of the attack on Gray's book doubtless came from British detestation of the war mixed with British certainty that the war is both inevitable and necessary mixed with concern about its interminable length. Part came from dislike of the Americans who would, like Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill, interfere because they see the Irish cause as a search for political freedom. But whatever the reason, Gray's *The Deserter* was caught in the middle and picked up a temporary notoriety where before it had had almost no recognition.

Of all the British YA literature, I would recommend that American teachers and librarians look at fifteen authors, partly because the fifteen are worth reading, partly because I am convinced that young adults here in the United States would enjoy them. I present them alphabetically to avoid immediate and obvious indication of my personal favorites. They will, I suspect, become clear soon enough.

Nina Bawden's several books, but especially *Carrie's War* (1973) and *Rebel on a Rock* (1978) are distinguished for style and content. I recognize that she is not as likely to gain the readership of other writers, but for a few sensitive readers, Bawden's books will repay the time remarkably well. Roy Brown's often psychological mysteries, especially *The Cage* (1976) and *Find Debbie!* (1975), and his studies of young hoodlums caught in a quandary not always of

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Donelson, Kenneth L. and Alleen Pace Nilson. ***Literature for Today's Young Adults***. Scott, Foresman, 1980. 448 pp., $10.50 (tentative).

The central purpose of this introduction to adolescent literature is to examine the social, psychological, and literary aspects of young adult literature and to survey its history as well as the full range of contemporary teenage books. That such a work has long been needed goes without saying. That the authors have brought it off so well is to their credit.

The fourteen chapters fall into four broad sections. The first contains two chapters. One looks at social and psychological aspects of the young adult, defines young adult literature, introduces a "best books" list from 1967 to 1977, and refutes nine basic myths about young adult literature (e.g., "Teenagers today cannot read."). The second discusses literary aspects of young adult books (plot, theme, etc.) with illustrations from specific works. As with all chapters, each of these concludes with activities for students who would use the text.

The second section examines the history of young adult literature in three chapters: "1800-1900: Of Much Purity and a Few Passions"; "1900-1940: From the Safety of Romance to the Beginning of Realism"; and "1940-1965: From Certainty to Uncertainty in Life and Literature Courtesy of Future Shock." These chapters are valuable not only for their excellent historical insights but also for the additional information they offer about adolescents developmentally and as readers.

The third and longest section on contemporary young adult literature will be for many readers the heart of the book. The lead chapter, "Of Life and Other Sad Songs: The New Realism," focuses on the "problem novel" from 1967, the publication year of S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*. This and other "groundbreaking" books—*Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones, The Pigman, Sounder,* etc.—signal a shift from the comic and romantic modes of earlier fiction toward the tragic and ironic. The authors' analysis of Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* illustrates this significant change.

"Of Wishing and Winning: The Old Romanticism" looks at the advernture-romance (e.g., Lipsyte's *One Fat Summer*) and the love-romance (*Seventeenth Summer* and *Forever*). "Of Sudden Shadows: Excitement and Suspense" explores adventure stories, westerns, mysteries, stories of the supernatural, and historical fiction. The discussion of Robin White's *Deathwatch* as it epitomizes the elements of the adventure story is particularly noteworthy in this chapter. "Of Wondrous Worlds: Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Utopia," "Of Heroes and Hopes: Life Models," and "Of Tantalizing Topics: Informational Books" round out the survey of books available to adolescent readers today. One of the useful features of this section is the sets of criteria suggested throughout for evaluating the

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Angelotti, Michael (Guest Editor). ***Texas Tech Journal of Education***, 7:1 (1980). Lubbock, Texas $4.00

Ten of the eleven contributors lead the reader through a most often careful and well-informed examination of the adolescent-teenage, young-adult novel. It is quite obvious, from the nearly exclusive consideration of the so-called "new realism," that historical fiction, science fiction and fantasy, biography and autobiography, and poetry do not come within the purview of this issue. Hopefully, this omission came about because of the editor's instructions, for these forms do, and should, remain a part of the adolescent's reading diet. There is a tangential discussion of the dramatization of contemporary fiction in the one entirely forgettable article. (To have only one shabby contribution in an entire journal must set some kind of record for excellence.)

Angelotti[1] establishes the theme that the teaching of literature to adolescents has, for the most part, failed to involve the reader and that, unless that occurs soon, there will be no literature programs in the curricula of the twenty-first century. Unsubstantiated as it must be, it is a thesis to which most forward-looking curriculum makers, teachers of junior and senior high school English, and professors of English education heartily subscribe.

Angelotti not only describes, he prescribes. What is needed is a "revolution" mounted by classroom practitioners, and coordinated and directed by ALAN. Though revolutions, particularly among English teachers and professors are difficult to foment and even more difficult to sustain, his ten practical suggestions merit serious consideration and, most likely, immediate implementation.

Burton[2] offers a detailed comparison of the difference between the teenage novel of the fifties and seventies. There have been many, nearly all improvements. For those of us who were in the profession during the fifties, the article may renew our faith in the future of adolescent literature. For those who were not, it is a succinct cataloging of changes that must be known if there is to be any real understanding of where teenage fiction stands now.

It is puzzling that "for excellence in the junior novel" Burton cites some thirty odd titles all of which, with the exception of *A Day No Pigs Would Die,* are contemporary, realistic fiction of the adolescent problem variety, and all are popular best sellers. I doubt that he equates excellence with popularity.

Small[3] builds a convincing argument that the young adult novel does, indeed, reflect the times during which it is written. If the novels written during the fifties seemed light and not very introspective, Small reminds us that they were written during the "Eisenhower Years" when much of our society was complacently basking in the rosy and reassuring sunset glow of World War II. So, why shouldn't the literature of

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strengths and weaknesses of such types as the problem novel, adventure stories, historical fiction, biographies, nonfiction, and journalistic fiction.

"Using and Promoting Books with Young Readers," the first chapter of the concluding section, reflects the range of appeal of the book as it discusses the uses of young adult literature by the librarian, the reading teacher, the social studies teacher, the English teacher, and the counselor or youth worker. Included here are valuable guidelines for individualized reading. The chapter on "Issues and Concerns for Adults" treats such topics as evaluation, ethnic books, young adult literature and the media, sex, and censorship. Because of the subject matter of so many teenage books, the censorship section is especially pertinent.

The final chapter, "The People Behind the Books," offers a glimpse of the future as perceived by an editor (Charlotte Zolotow), a person in charge of sales and promotion (Doris Bass), and more than thirty young adult authors. These personal statements add a special dimension to the book and should be a unique treat for those studying young adult literature for the first time.

Among the book's appendices are guides to book selection, and excellent bibliography of books and articles about young adult literature, and the text of *The Students' Right to Read.*

Literature for Today's Young Adults is comprehensive, thorough in its treatment, and written in a fresh, readable style. The extensive background and experience of the authors in adolescent literature is everywhere evident, and their book is a significant contribution to the scholarship in the field.

Hugh Agee

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the late sixties, seventies, and on into the eighties, reflect the inner tensions, conflicts, and anxieties that increasingly threaten all of us and, indeed, our very culture.

Too bad that *Too Bad About the Haynes Girl*, written in 1967, is referred to as one that "demonstrates the importance of sexual activity in the teenage life of the seventies." If I recall correctly, the Haynes girl "did it" only once, and that with her husband-to-be. Both suffered great pangs of remorse, even before her pregnancy was discovered.

Bleich[4] summarizes much of the important professional literature which has addressed itself to the importance of literature meeting the needs and interests of the adolescent reader. (Be there a soul in the reading audience who, upon first awakening from a sound sleep, doesn't mumble, "Literature should meet the needs and interest of the reader?" Probably not. But, judging from the literature programs in far too many schools, few of us believe our mumblings.)

If the reader is still unable to recite that catechism, then Bettelheim, Carlsen, Dunning, Erikson, Kohlberg, Purvis, Rosenblatt, *et al.* are offered up here for his or her enlightenment. It is an impressive array.

Ellis and Blair[5] had the audacity to ask readers in grades nine through twelve where they wanted the emphasis placed in their study of literature. Not a bad idea, since a great deal of our recent professional writing has focused on the content of the literature with less attention being given to how it is taught.

Students were forced to choose among emphasis being placed on (1) the author, his life and times; (2) ideas expressed by the author or provoked by the literary work; (3) information about structure or form of the work; (4) the historical setting of the work; and (5) the students' affective responses to the work. The findings, while not particularly startling, are impressive in that the overwhelming majority plunked for personal responses to literature, with increasing emphasis as the readers decrease in grade level, and for the ideas. Many of the supporting findings reveal similarities and differences in response that should influence our approaches to teaching literature.

Muller and Muller[6] examine many of those subtle factors which, beyond simple readability as measured by simplistic formulas, so heavily influence the students' comprehension of particlar books. They also note that the more recent teenage novels tend to be growing in reading difficulty as authors increasingly employ more sophisticated literary techniques. Good points! It probably doesn't need to be stated, but I will, that sophisticated literary techniques don't necessarily insure good writing. Much teenage fiction is mutilated by contemporary authors who, in their attempts to be "literary," reveal their own shallow understandings of just what is good writing.

Hipple[7] takes a light-hearted, but serious, approach to helping teenage readers be more critically aware of what they are reading for enjoyment. In so doing, he offers his own comparative evaluation of *Forever* and *It's O. K. If You Don't Love Me. (Forever* wins). His three suggested criteria—reflections of real life, artistry in details, and significant insights—need to be shared with all of us, not just adolescents, who read for pleasure. Hipple's forthright approach is a refreshing one.

Gallo[8] and associates polled Connecticut high school principals to discover their reading habits, their familiarity with contemporary fiction for adolescents, and their attitudes toward it. The premise being that the more familiar the principal is with the current literature, the more supportive he or she may be of a forward looking literature program. (An interesting, if tenuous, thesis.)

Findings weren't at all surprising, merely depressing. Principals, at least those Connecticut principals who responded to the questionnaire, are not particularly enthusiastic about teenage literature; some hold it in distrust, many seem unaware of it, a few don't even read much of anything at all.

The obvious bottom line is that principals need enlightenment, and it is up to us English pros to do the job. (What principals need most of all is thick skins. Will someone please do a study or write an article that reveals principals as possessing no more human frailties than most of the rest of us?)

Bondra[9] identifies those features which do and don't make teenage fiction easily adaptable to the visual media. Anyone who is concerned over adapta-

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their own making, especially *Flight of Sparrows* (1972), are simply fine reading capable of enjoyment and understanding at several levels. William Corlett's "emotional" trilogy beginning with *The Gate of Eden* (1974) is multi-level and sophisticated, yet students from quite diverse backgrounds have found significance and meaning in his books.

Peter Dickinson's many books represent a wealth and range, from the semi-science fiction of his "Changes" trilogy to the semi-historical novels like *The Blue Hawk* (1976) to the mysticism of *Annerton Pit* (1977) to the recent and marvelous *Tulku* (1979). Alan Garner has received enough praise; he hardly needs mine. That *The Owl Service* (1976) will never be popular with many youngsters, or many adults for that matter, has already been said far too often. It still remains a remarkable book. Garner's more recent quartet beginning with *The Stone Book* (1976-77) may win no more readers, though I suspect these slim volumes may, but in any case all four are worth a reader's time.

Leon Garfield, on the other hand, is far more accessible, and his historical novels, most of them set in the stormy seas of the Eighteenth Century, are elegant and readable and loaded with excitement and adventure and humor from *Smith* (1967) on through *Black Jack* (1968), *The South of Coaches* (1974)—my favorite, *The Strange Affair of Adelaide Harris* (1971)—his funniest, *The Pleasure Garden* (1976)—his darkest, and *The Confidence Man* (1978). I believe in Leon Garfield's work, probably because I'm still more than half in love with the Eighteenth Century and will likely always think it the most bizarre, most intriguing, most engaging of all centuries in British history.

John Gordon's scary and mystical ghost stories fascinate me from *The Ghost on the Hill* (1976) to the recent *The Waterfall Box* (1978). Barry Hines has long been admired for *A Kestrel for a Knave* (1968)—sometimes published as *Kes*—which is both a magnificent animal tale and a brilliant initiation story. Allan Campbell McLean writes gorgeous adventure tales like *Storm Over Skye* (1955) and *Ribbon of Fire* (1962), but his masterpiece is *Master of Morgana* (1960). McLean may have written something dull, but I wouldn't know since I have never found it. His tales of the stormy, bleak, and moody Isle of Skye are tinged with mystery and adventure more than a bit reminiscent of Robert Louis Stevenson, but more the Stevenson of *Kidnapped* than *Treasure Island*.

K. M. Peyton writes beautifully of initiation and pain and growth in her "Flambards" (1967-69) trilogy. But *The Right-Hand Man* (1977) is a good historical novel, *Windfall* (1962) conveys a sense of the sea as few other books do, and *A Midsummer Night's Death* (1978) is a mystery and much more. Rosemary Sutcliff lacks Leon Garfield's humor, but her delight in other times and places and her surehanded knowledge of those times mixed with her ability to recreate times and places for younger readers makes her a superior novelist, historical or otherwise. Choosing a few of her titles is always difficult, she has been so prolific, but surely *The Eagle of the Ninth* (1954), *Blood Feud (1976)*, *The Mark of the Horse Lord* (1965), and the *Lantern Bearers* (1959) deserve reading. For that matter, all she has written deserves reading. John Rowe Townsend is a first-rate critic who also happens to be a first-rate writer. *Good-Night, Prof, Love* (1970)—why it was retitled *Good Night, Prof, Dear* in America escapes me, *The Intruder* (1969), and *The Visitors* (1977) seem to me his most successful novels.

Jill Paton Walsh is less well known here than she deserves. *The Dolphin Crossing* (1967) is a fine war book, one worth recommending to anyone who asks what it is like to be at the center of pressure in wartime. But her best three books combine love and initiation, *Fireweed* (1969), *Goldengrove* (1972), and *Unleaving* (1976). Barbara Willard writes historical novels unlike those of either Garfield or Sutcliff. *The Grove of Green Holly* (1967) is a romp through Cromwell's time, odd though that sounds, as Shakesperean actors seek other work. Her greatest achievement is her "Mantlemass" series beginning with *The Lark and the Laurel* (1970). Ivan Southall is my favorite of several excellent Australian authors. His books from *Hill's End* (1962) through *Josh* (1971) and *What About Tomorrow?* (1977) and *Ash Road* (1966) and *King of the Sticks* (1979) are great reading, often adventurous and always filled with the excitement and dangers and problems of being young and alive.

What I've told you is the merest superficial introduction to British YA literature. I urge you to seek out more information and more books for your own reading. This I know: British literature for young adults is worth your time, and my time, and the time of our students. It is not all great or even good, no literature is all of one kind, but it deserves your serious attention.

Superior as British YA literature often is, its future may be bleak if some of the publishers and critics I talked to can be believed. Censorship problems probably contribute to their feelings, but I detected a genuine regret that many of the best writers (e.g., Townsend, Garfield, and Garner) may soon see no future in writing for young adults, only a future in writing for children or adults. Of course, good books should cross age lines, but young adults, and not only the reluctant or slow readers, deserve writers writing for them and about them. Whether YA literature will continue to exist in Great Britain seems open to question. That is particularly sad because YA literature seems so healthy in America and because British literature has produced so many books of quality.

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[1] John Rowe Townsend, *25 Years of British Children's Books*. London: National Book League, 1977.
[2] Frank Eyre, *British Children's Books in the Twentieth Century*. London: Longman, 1971, p. 150.
[3] Aidan Chambers, *Introducing Books to Children*. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1973, p. 121.

Beyond Books—Media for the Classroom

Dan Ward, Georgia State Department of Education

Even after nearly a decade of teaching and many more years in education, I still insist that frustration does not appeal to me. Yet, like a cartoon character's cloud of doom, it seems to accompany me wherever I go, most recently to San Francisco and the exhibit area of the NCTE Conference.

What I wanted did not seem unreasonable, new media products that addressed literature. Simple, right? . . . wrong! What the sales reps were offering were bundles of basics, fountains of fundamentals, miles of media featuring dancing punctuation marks, pirouetting periods, cute little animated commas, and a surfeit of skills (reading skills, communication skills, study skills, library skills, usage skills, abusage skills, *et al.*)

"What about literature? You know, one of the better reasons why people learn to read."

"No, I don't want a free coffee pot for previewing your new career communication series, but I'll take it (them) if you'll just show me some media that address literature."

"No, I'm not opposed to literacy. Yes, I want to increase SAT scores. Yes, I am an American."

"Does it take a birth certificate to get to preview new materials? Will you take a driver's license?"

Fortunately, media of the type desired do exist; one simply must know where to look, well beyond this year's marketing "hype."

For example, Films Incorporated (MovieStrip Division, 1144 Wilmette Avenue, Wilmette, Illinois 60091), following its already well-established and profitable formula for converting popular films to filmstrips, has another certain success for them and a worthwhile product for us in *The Scarlet Letter.* Their process is deceptively simple to describe, although not so easy to accomplish I'm sure. Find a successful film, such as WGBH-TV's multi-part production of *The Scarlet Letter;* select enough stills to support the story line; edit and splice the sound track; "Viola!" The original production is pared to an acceptable three strip/three cassette package. Meg Foster (Hester) is just as attractive still as she is moving, and the budget suffers far less strain at filmstrip/cassette prices.

On a less flippant note, the filmstrip has quite a number of advantages. It is obviously more affordable and more manageable within the classroom. The strip, while providing a most satisfying overview and/or summary, does not supplant the print original. Also, because of its tri-partite structure, it can be metered out to match the students' reading rates or used with individuals or small groups as they progress in their reading. As usual Films Inc. offers a most professional and desirable package.

Hawthorne's position in American letters is quite well fixed and really requires no explanation. However, it might be worth considering *The Scarlet Letter* out of its chronological sequence. Plug it into the Puritan period and enliven that vacuum a bit, or put it with materials featuring female writers and protagonists. Hesters' regardless of the author's sex, is certainly one very strong and very admirable woman. (59 min., $79.50)

Shelia Schwartz, not unknown to ALAN members or *Review* readers, has authored a well-planned two-part series, a Schloat Productions Presentation for Prentice-Hall Media (150 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York 10591) titled *Adolescent Literature: Family Life and Lifestyles* and *Adolescent Literature: Teenage Love.* Four YA novels are introduced in each filmstrip.

The former features Danziger's *The Cat Ate My Gymsuit*, Klein's *Mom, the Wolfman and Me,* Engebrecht's *Under the Haystack* and Cleavers' *Grover.* The latter features Kerr's *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack!* Savitz's *The Lionhearted,* Head's *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones,* and McKay's *Dave's Song.*

The stories are outlined in broad, sweeping terms, and thematic possibilities are considered as an integral part of the presentation. Enough data is provided to spur student reading without discouraging it. Numerous possibilities for discussion exist as well as plenty of room to connect story and/or theme with material not presented; the accompanying guide supplies an annotated bibliography of additional readings for each strip. Stills in the filmstrip are photos of real, less-than-perfect young people in settings appropriate for each of the novels considered. Because issues as well as specifics are discussed, the useful range of this two-part series is rather extensive (middle school, junior high, and/or high school as well as college classes in adolescent literature). For the money, it's a good buy.

Learning Corporation (1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York City, New York 10019) continues in the production and distribution of quality classroom films with plenty of potential. Three of their newer releases, *Night Flight, Best Horse,* and *A Rainy Day,* are just that, quality with potential. Each is quite different, yet each has much to recommend it.

Night Flight is a cinematic translation of Antoine de Saint Exupéry's novel of the same name. Wise use of medium and content is made in this unembellished film of aviation in the early years, the 1930s. Beyond its visually beautiful rendering of a nearly over-shadowed work, the film in a brief 22 minutes deals with life and love, duty and death, and the weighty burden of command. An appropriate and authentic Gaullish fatalism pervades the work but does not diminish its haunting and inherent beauty.

A less sophisticated viewer could appreciate and gain from this production; but I feel its greatest impact and utility would be among high school or older students. Fidelity to the period makes *Night Flight* a useful companion for American literature of the same era; however, it would be equally appropriate as a counterpoint to literature focusing upon pioneering

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efforts, whether Mayflower or moon landings, efforts in which being first meant risking lives, hopes, and dreams. (22 min., $325 sale, $30 rent)

Best Horse and *A Rainy Day* treat family relationships, primarily daughters and mothers. *Best Horse*, a project combining talents from Learning Corporation and Scholastic Press, focuses on Wendy Herstead's desire to participate in a local rodeo and her mother's equally strong determination to prevent it, to encourage Wendy to aspire to higher things than rodeo and ranch life. Mrs. Herstead's attempts at bending Wendy to her will are juxtaposed with Wendy's attempts at bending her horse "Kick" to behaviors ill-suited to him. Mrs. Herstead and Wendy each must learn about "pushing rivers" and forcing things to be what they are not.

Best Horse is not an intellectual's film; rather, it is a good story accessible to middle school and younger high school students. The plot line is clear and uncomplicated; a number of possibilities exist for class discussion and projects. Didacticism is avoided, as is the temptation to pronounce winners and losers in the parent-child conflict. (28 min., $425 sale, $40 rent)

A Rainy Day contrasts sharply with *Best Horse*, yet similar issues are treated, i.e., family relationships, mothers and daughters, and the aspirations of one for the other. Subtlety in technique and presentation is very much the rule in *A Rainy Day*. The shining, bright mood of *Best Horse* is displaced with a funereal opening, complete with cortege, generally overcast skies, and rain . . . literal and figurative. Steshy, the successful television daughter, returns after a five-year absence for her father's funeral. In a series of flashbacks, their home life and Sheshy's childhood are revealed. Clear statements are mixed with veiled hints of parental conflict—mama's dissatisfaction with daddy, her drive, his love of fun—and the impact of this discord upon Steshy. "No, mother, I'm not dating anyone now."

Emotional conflict dominates the film but in a profitable way. Judgments are avoided here as well. Instead, a tentative rapprochement between mother and daughter ends the film as does the warmth of the sun. While nothing objectionable appears in the film, it is clearly for the older or more mature student audience. (35 min., $400 sale, $40 rent)

Any print material in which parent-child conflicts exist would be enhanced by both of these films. Some obvious possibilities are Danziger's *The Cat Ate My Gymsuit*, Kerr's *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack*, Klein's *Mom, the Wolfman and Me*, Zindel's *Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*, . . . ; the list is really too long to continue because of what are literally universal themes, sorting (extracting) one's own life from that of one's parents. Depending on the maturity level, both films could be useful in courses in sociology, family, parenting, and (*A Rainy Day*) on marriage.

Miller-Brody's (Random House, Inc., 400 Hahn Road, Westminster, Maryland 21157) Newberry series is a bit different from the above. It is a sound-filmstrip series which concentrates on *authors* of Newberry Medal or Honor Books. While the author's works are given attention, it is the author who is featured. Addressed to young people, the series provides insights into the private and professional lives of twenty artists and introductions to some of their works.

After the differing views presented in the Fall '79 *Review* of *Summer of My German Soldier*, I elected to preview the sound filmstrip on Bette Greene. It proved to be as advertised—insightful, interesting, informative, and a good introduction to two of her works *Summer of My German Soldier* and *Philip Hall Likes Me, I Reckon Maybe*. If the Bette Greene sound-strip is an example, the series is worth more than a passing glance. Other writers included are Lloyd Alexander, William H. Armstrong, Natalie Babbitt, Carol Ryrie Brink, Betsy Byars, Beverly Cleary, Susan Cooper, Eleanor Estes, Jean Craighead George, Virginia Hamilton, Marguerite Henry, Jamake Highwater, Madeline L'Engle, Arnold Lobel, Scott O'Dell, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Elizabeth Yates, and Laurence Yep. ($31.98 each for cassette or disc and filmstrip; some price break is available for purchase of the entire series)

One of the more agreeable aspects of starting a new decade is the certainty that it won't end the same way it began. Ten years is too long a time for things to remain unchanged. On that cheery note, I'm looking forward to the exhibits at the '89 conference; they're bound to be different . . . aren't they?

Ricochet—Readers React

For some months now the debate has continued over the portrayal of Jews and Nazis in literature, especially in *Summer of My German Soldier*, by Bette Greene. While readers are encouraged to react to the content of each issue of *The ALAN Review*, I hope that Ms. Greene's contribution might be the end of this particular, specific controversy.

W. G. E.

Dear Editor:

In her letter that commented on my novel *Summer of My German Soldier* (*ALAN*, Fall 1979) Sheila Schwartz states, "Nazis would have loved this book and film." . . . I find that very disturbing. This is the first time that I've ever responded to a critic, but as a practicing Jew, I am saddened by her thesis that I have given aide and comfort to those that murdered my people.

Over the years I have received thousands of letters about *Summer of My German Soldier* and the writers invariably understood that Anton Reiker was, not only not a Nazi, but a frightened and reluctant soldier. They also pick up on the fact that Harry Bergen is not set up as a role model for Jewish fathers. He too is what he is: An insecure and bitter man who just happens to be Jewish.

In the middle West, some Christian girls started The Patty Bergen Club because they wanted to incorporate in their lives, her ideas. Although the girls didn't use the words heroine, it seemed clear to me that that twelve-year-old girl from Jenkinsville, Arkansas had made a profound and hopefully constructive impact on their lives.

Bette Greene

Cormier, continued from page 1

For instance, the first version of *After the First Death* was in the form of a series of letters between the general and his son. I intended to tell the entire story in this epistolary form but eventually discarded it as too self-limiting. As a result, I threw away several thousand words that nobody knew about, and I threw them away without apology because I was uncommitted at the time.

At the outset, I thought the novel would actually be a love story. I knew there would be an emotional collision when Kate Forrester met Miro—would some kind of attachment be formed in the pressure of the situation? I thought it likely. But it didn't turn out that way.

When I'm at the typewriter (or driving the car or waiting in a supermarket line) and all time time thinking of characters, I am conscious of letting them come and go, allowing them to do all sorts of things. Some have staying power, others drift off. Some are not anticipated but arrive and stay around (like Amy Hertz in what became *I Am The Cheese* or Emile Janza in what became *The Chocolate War*). I don't think of them as characters in a structure novel I am writing but simply as people I'm watching grow and change. I don't sit down at the typewriter at 9 o'clock in the morning and tell myself that I must write five or 10 pages by noontime. I go to the typewriter to find out, say, what is going to happen today when young Adam Farmer goes into that lunchroom in Carver, New Hampshire, and confronts those three bullies. It may take five pages or 10 pages or 15 to find out. But finding out is the peculiar joy I encounter when I'm writing, although that same finding out sometimes leads me astray and costs me countless pages that are eventually discarded.

This is exactly what's happening now with the new novel, although I hesitate to use the word at this point. Characters are colliding all over the place. The situations evolve and then change. I tear pages out of the typewriter and regard them with dismay. Sometimes, the words sing on the page and I am exhilarated beyond, well, words. Characters leap to vivid life, others remain lumps on the page. There are moments when I want to put it all aside and write something else. There are times when I ask myself: Why have I told anybody that I'm writing a novel called *The Bumble Bee Flies Anyway*? Maybe what passes for the bumble bee in the story won't fly, after all. When people asked about the novel, why didn't I keep quiet, smile mysteriously and change the subject?

Next time, I tell myself, that's exactly what I'll do. Smile. Mysteriously. And say nothing.

Blue Pencil Notes, continued from page 2

convince past students of the essence of education, but that's another story.

Our schools must be utilitarian, our language must be utilitarian, our products must be utilitarian. Unfortunately aesthetic development cannot be accommodated by these confines. We must be busy with the task of developing sets of Mr. Spocks for the "clear-thinking, unemotive" roles in society.

The reading material many students are naturally drawn to in this milieu is, of course, utilitarian (informational books) or rapidly paced novels (something must grab them on the first page—and frequently thereafter). Delights are to be had, not anticipated, and there is the ironic result. Without the development of patience and a sense of enjoyment in the development of pleasurable experiences (reading included), the greatest joys will never be embraced. Encourage students to take time in their writing, letting it meander. Encourage them to dawdle with their reading. The damage of speed reading is unmeasured. How much better to have *experienced* a single book than merely to have read three or four.

Lest all seem grim, we *are* blessed with some few writers who understand this. Unfortunately, there are more whose books seem to indicate the contrary. The balance, or imbalance, is probably about the same for both YA literature and adult literature.

It is sad to believe that we are powerless to stem the tide which threatens to cut us off from the best of literature and life. Even if we are powerless, it is even sadder to think that we have been a part of this regrettable development rather than valiant defenders of the faith—faith in what is truly beautiful and worthy in life and writing.

In spite of all, I remain ultimately optimistic. Not perhaps for the coming fifteen or so years but for a more distant future, for how can a true believer ever lose faith in the basic nature of humankind? Just think back to those distant days when the ancients recounted tales around their fires; think of any really good storytellers, and you can see that this basic love for a good story will survive. And, of course, a major part of the enjoyment of a good story is in its telling. I believe, romantic that I am, that people will eventually triumph over society.

W. G. E.

Research Funds Offered

The Children's Literature Research Collections offers Grants-in-Aid to students of American Children's Literature. Funding for this program is provided by the Saint Paul Foundation. The Hess Collection of 70,000 Dime Novels and Story Papers, and the Series Book Collection, consisting of 10,000 volumes, provide resources for the researcher.

Grants-in-Aid will be awarded to qualified scholars whose research requires the use of the collections of the Children s Literature Research Collections. Preference will be given to post-graduates, but other applications will be considered. Selected applicants will receive transportation and $25 per diem. Hess Fellows will be selected by the Grant-in-Aid Committee in 1980 and 1981.

Applications for 1980 must be in the hands of the committee by April 1, 1980; and for 1981 by April 1, 1981. For application materials or further information contact:

Grant-in-Aid Committee
Children's Literature Research Collections
109 Walter Library
117 Pleasant Street S.E.
University of Minnesota Libraries
Minneapolis, MN 55455
612/373-9731

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tion, or who just plain wonders why some books adapt easily while others fail, will find his article stimulating. Further, he makes a good argument for taking the matter of adaptation seriously.

Maynard[10], in his attempts to offer 'a publisher's view of some limitations of adolescent literature,' is a disaster. By his own admission he "first became aware of adolescent literature in 1978 . . . ." when, as editor of a "magazine for on-level readers in grades eight through 12" he was trying to rescue it from "its inability to speak to its teenage audience." (Was it ever thus with school magazines.)

He attempts to tell us why contemporary teenage fiction can't be excerpted to save his "on-level" magazine. (Right there is a hint.) The reader is also assured that, aside from Mazer's short story collection *Dear Bill, Remember Me?*, no other collections of contemporary short stories are available. (Of course, there are.) Maynard mentions a number of literary flaws that prevent the teenage novel from being excerpted for his magazine and, indeed, "prevents them from becoming serious literature." Curiously, he never mentions one obvious reason why many contemporary teenage novels cannot be excerpted for publication in what must be, to insure widespread sales, an absolutely "safe" publication: Questionable language.

In Maynard's defense, the subject was not an appropriate one for him. Someone should have solicited a manuscript from an editor of a major publisher of juvenile literature.

Agee[11], in making some discerning observations concerning the maturation of the young adult novel, states, "In the process of moving away from (its previous) conservative posture, the Young Adult novel has achieved remarkable growth and artistic maturity; and while there are critics who still talk of the death of the novel as an art form, the current status of the Young Adult Novel suggests a promising future." He goes on to identify many of the features that have contributed to this development.

In conclusion, Agee hazards some advisedly guarded predictions concerning the future of the young adult novel, each of which provides for interesting speculation on the part of the reader. One he doesn't mention is what I consider one of the gloomier possibilities. Should the paperback and the television industries ever recognize the enormous sales potential of what Agee refers to as the "novelization" of television drama and make a carefully orchestrated and promoted campaign to provide simultaneous publication for the television series, it could mean the end of the adult middle-person in the book selection process. Another prediction that might be made is, that because of a new binding process which makes it economically feasible to have first printings of 3,000 hardbacks instead of the more common 7,500, we may find greater experimentation with subjects and/or new authors. Consequently we may, hopefully, find a bit more experimentation with new forms and authors.

This issue of the *Texas Tech Journal of Education* is highly commendable reading for anyone concerned with adolescents and young adults and what they read.

Shelton L. Root, Jr.

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Nominations Called

The Nominations Committee is seeking suggestions for nominees for several ALAN offices. The offices to be filled by election are:

- Vice President/ President Elect
- Secretary
- Three directorships.

All nominees must be members of ALAN. Please send your suggestions to the Nominations Committee Chair: Mike Angelotti, College of Education, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas 79409.

The other members of the nominations committee are: Al Muller, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina; Jackie M. Cronin, Librarian, South High School, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Nominations must be received by March 30, 1980.

British Study Tour Offered

"The Matter of Britain III: A Study Tour of Children's and Young Adult Literature in Great Britain" will be offered for academic credit (graduate and undergraduate) in English and Education, June 23 to July 15, 1980, by the University of Maine at Orono, Orono, Maine. Participants will travel in Great Britain visiting sites associated with literary classics, including a special trip to Green Knowe, and will meet with authors, illustrators, and critics. Speakers include: Bernard Ashley, John Burningham, Aidan and Nancy Chambers, Peter Dickinson, Rosemary Sutcliff, and Robert Westall. For additional information, contact Mary Lou Colbath, Department of English, 304 E/M, University of Maine at Orono, Orono, Maine 04469.